



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 27, 2002

For Information Contact Public Affairs
Mike Johns 602-514-7566

ELEVEN MEN SENTENCED FOR VIOLATIONS OF FEDERAL WILDLIFE LAWS

PHOENIX, ARIZONA – The U. S. Attorney’s Office and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today the sentences of eleven individuals indicted by a Federal Grand Jury during 2000 and 2001 for violations of federal wildlife laws stemming from an investigation dubbed “Operation Navajo Buck”. The eleven paid a total of \$84,000 in fines, restitution, and penalties and one aircraft was forfeited by the court.

The investigation, which began in 1998, focused on several big game guides, based in Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico, who were suspected of unlawfully using aircraft prior to and during hunting seasons to locate deer and elk for hunting clients in Northern Arizona. The investigation also focused on illegal guiding and hunting on the Navajo Indian Reservation.

The following individuals were convicted of a Federal criminal violation for unlawful hunting on the Navajo Indian Reservation and sentenced as follows:

Dan SMITH JR, San Jose, CA, was ordered to pay a \$5,000 fine and \$25,000 restitution to the Navajo Department of Wildlife. In a related civil action the Court ordered the forfeiture of a powered parachute aircraft seized from **SMITH JR** in April of 2000.

Steven STAYNER, Mesa, AZ, was ordered to pay a \$1,000 fine. A Federal civil action seeking the forfeiture of a powered parachute aircraft owned by **STAYNER**, for alleged violations of the Airborne Hunting Act, is currently being litigated.

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Kenneth Clint HEIBER, Red Bluff, CA, was ordered to pay a \$5,000 fine and \$25,000 restitution to the Navajo Department of Wildlife. In addition **HEIBER** was ordered to abandon a trophy mule deer killed on the Navajo Indian Reservation in December, 1997, and subsequently seized by Agents of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in March of 2000.

Joseph Aggi, Red Bluff, CA, was ordered to pay a \$2,000 fine and ordered not to hunt for a period of two years.

Samuel S. JAKSICK JR, Reno, NV, was ordered to pay a \$4,500 fine and \$7,500 restitution to the Navajo Department of Wildlife.

Julius FORTUNA, Phoenix, AZ, was ordered to pay a fine of \$2,500.

A. Paul STEWART, Phoenix, AZ, was ordered to pay a fine of \$2,500. A Federal civil action seeking the forfeiture of a powered parachute aircraft owned by **STEWART**, for alleged violations of the Airborne Hunting Act, is currently being litigated.

Mule deer videographer **Ryan S. HATCH**, Kanab, UT, was convicted of a criminal violation of the Lacey Act related to the taking of a mule deer on the Navajo Indian Reservation in 1997. Hatch was sentenced to five years probation and ordered to pay a \$1,000 fine. **HATCH'S** conditions of probation require that he be in full compliance with State, Federal, and Tribal regulations when conducting hunting related activities including scouting for game or video taping.

The following individuals paid Federal Notices of Violation for unlawful hunting on the Navajo Indian Reservation as follows:

Daniel SMITH III, San Jose, CA, \$5,000.

Lary NICOLDS, Garland, UT, \$500.

Mark LEFEVRE, Tropic, UT, \$500.

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The Lacey Act is a Federal wildlife law which makes it unlawful to transport, sell, receive, acquire or purchase wildlife which was taken, transported, possessed, or sold in violation of State, Federal, or Indian tribal laws or regulations.

The Airborne Hunting Act is a Federal wildlife law which makes it unlawful to shoot animals from an aircraft or to harass animals with an aircraft. The Airborne Hunting Act Regulations prohibits a person, while on the ground, from taking or attempting to take wildlife by means, aid, or use of an aircraft

The investigation that led to the convictions was conducted by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service with assistance from the Arizona Game and Fish Department, and the Navajo Department of Fish and Wildlife. The prosecution was handled by Assistant United States Attorneys Paul V. Rood and Camille Bibles of U. S. Attorney's Office, District of Arizona, Phoenix, Arizona.

RELEASE 2002-072

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